

**WINTER
2004**



The FLAP

News for the Folks of Lake Accotink Park
703-569-3464 <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/accotink>



Welcome Back, Otter!

River Otters are native to rivers and lakes throughout the United States and Canada. However, their population has been in decline during the 20th century due to a number of historic and environmental reasons. River otters have faced much hardship since Europeans first began exporting raw materials from North America. These animals were popular targets of fur trappers during the 18th and 19th centuries because of their thick, beautiful coats. Unrestricted trapping practices led to the species' initial decline.



The Chesapeake Bay Program has been helpful in restoring the river otter population in this region. The Chesapeake Bay and its watershed, including the Accotink Creek, is a major habitat for river otters in the Mid-Atlantic Region. Otter populations appear to be on the rebound here

A clean water source and a healthy food chain are a necessities for river otter survival. Declining populations were further decimated by vast deforestation and improper agricultural practices, which flooded lakes and streams with soil from erosion and other runoff, upsetting the otters' food chain. Water pollution and the destruction of their wetland habitats have proven to be major issues for otters in this area. Otters living near the Potomac River were affected by runoff from pesticides, including DDT and industrial strength solvents, and toxic metals, the most critical being mercury fallout. This poi-

soned the otters as well as their food supply. The Potomac River was considered toxic during the 70's and 80's and otters disappeared from Lake Accotink. This disappearance is a sign of an unhealthy watershed.

The river otter has been listed as an endangered species in 15 states. However, great efforts have been taken to bring the otter back to its historical presence in its native regions, especially on the east coast. The native otter population is greatest on Maryland's Eastern shore; otters have been taken from this region for repopulation efforts in other parts of the coast. Additionally, the Pennsylvania River Otter Reintroduction Project, or PROP, has been releasing animals into the wild since 1982. Eighty-three otters have now been reintroduced thanks to this program.

partially due to these conversation efforts and efforts to improve the overall health of the Chesapeake Bay. Additionally, otters may have built up immunity to some of the toxins commonly found in the water, which helps the otters to survive once reintroduced. Several river otter sightings over the past two years here at Lake Accotink Park are one sign that the health of the watershed is improving. This population resurgence is a sign of the improved water quality and general health of the environment in the area.

Otters are extremely energetic creatures well adapted to aquatic life. Although they often appear playful, they are formidable predators. Its body is streamlined like a torpedo for quick underwater

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The Trails Belong to You!

Lake Accotink Park operates a Trail Watch program of volunteers who report on activities and conditions of the trails around Lake Accotink and at nearby Brookfield Park. These volunteers report safety hazards and suspicious activities, as well as serve as public relations "ambassadors" of the Fairfax County Park Authority.

The Trail Watch program is ideal for anyone who walks, runs, or bikes the trails in the park and would like to help keep them safe and enjoyable. The program is structured to allow shifts of as little as two hours. Lake Accotink Park covers 493 acres and has an extensive network of trails used for hiking, biking, and walking.

Trail Watch volunteers also help protect wildlife habitat and wetlands by reporting situations where human activity threatens to degrade the natural environment. While walking or leisurely biking along the trails, Trail Watch volunteers can enjoy the beauty of the park while helping to preserve its resources and keep it safe.

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See back for Important Information on Winter Events!!!

Trail Watch Program

(Trail Watch Recruitment continued from page 1)

Trail Watch volunteers supplement the work of park staff by serving as extra eyes and ears, reporting trail conditions, safety hazards, lost or injured citizens, and suspicious or unsafe activity. In addition, they may hand out flyers and interact with trail users to educate them on trail etiquette, safety and environmental awareness. Groups or individuals interested in joining Lake Accotink Park's team of Trail Watch volunteers should call 703-569-0285 or stop by the Lake Accotink Park office to fill out an application. Orientations are scheduled periodically, with the next one slated for Sunday, February 8, 2004 from 3:00 – 5:00 p.m. Trail Watch volunteers who complete the orientation will receive a T-shirt



A map of Lake Accotink Park which can also be found on the park's website.

or vest and copy of Park Rules and Regulations.

While on duty, volunteers will carry a park two-way radio and a first aid kit.

Active and committed volunteers are the backbone of our parks. The Trail Watch program benefits volunteers in so many ways. They enjoy meeting people with similar interests; sharing their personal knowledge of the park and its trails with people of all ages; fostering appreciation and respect for the natural environment; and enhancing enjoyment of the park for everyone.

Lake Accotink Park is located in central Springfield, just off Highland Street. The address is 7500 Accotink Park Road, Springfield, Virginia 22150.

Ten Winter Safety Tips:

Here are a few things you should know to help you enjoy the season safely.

1. Ice skating is NOT allowed on Lake Accotink. The lake does not freeze completely and cannot support a person.

2. While sledding is allowed in the park, watch out for potential hazards like signs, trees, and proximity to streets.

3. The sun sets quickly during the winter. Make sure you plan enough time to get home safely.

4. Wear sunscreen! You can still burn during the winter. Snow and ice magnify the effects of the sun.

5. Tell someone where you are going and what time you expect to arrive.

6. Remember to drink plenty of water if you are exercising or working outside. You can become dehydrated even during the winter!



7. Don't leave pets outside for too long. Their nose, feet and ears can become frostbitten.

8. Dress appropriately for the weather. Learn the warning signs of hypothermia and frostbite.

9. Try to always exercise or play outside with a buddy. That way, if there is an accident, someone will be able to get help quickly.

10. Remember that street salt can irritate your pets' feet.



Kids Corner

Winter Birthday Party Packages

Fun in the sun isn't just for those summer birthdays anymore...

Now you can plan your party in a winter wonderland! New packages include tour boat rides, mini-golf, Edgar the Magician, and Nature Night Hikes. Call Lake Accotink Park for more information on pricing and packages today.

Office (703)569-0285
TTY (703)569-5200



Go Fish! Introduction to Fishing for Kids (Ages 6-12)

Leap into fishin' fun in the great outdoors. Learn fishing techniques and practices including knot tying, tackle use, etiquette and more. Poles and tackle are provided.

\$10 a child- Only \$15 more to take your pole with you!

**Sunday February 29
2pm-4pm**

Call (703)569-0285 for more info
TTY (703)569-5200



Website Update:

Check out Lake Accotink Park's updated website! In addition to information on park events and services, information on the parkland's history and a webcam have been added! The webcam over looks the lake and gives the temperature, humidity, and barometric pressure.

Look us up at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/accotink>

Bike MORE!:

Lake Accotink Park Expands Biking Education Program

Biking enthusiasts, as well as novices to the sport, can exercise their interest in this popular past time at Lake Accotink Park in Springfield. The park is partnering with Mid-Atlantic Offroad Enthusiasts (MORE) to offer biking classes and a biking workshop this Spring. A class for beginners and intermediate-level bikers is being offered Saturday mornings 10-12pm for 5 weeks beginning March 27, 2004.

Additionally, an half-day workshop on bike maintenance and environmental awareness will be offered in the Spring. The exact date will be determined based on interest. Individuals should contact Lake Accotink Park, 703-569-0285, to be placed on an "interest list."



MORE members doing trail work at nearby Fountainhead Park.

Biking is a positive, healthy activity for families and riders of all ages. Individuals who participate in Lake Accotink Park's biking programs will gain from the experience in several ways. They will: meet people with

similar interests; gain practice and acquire techniques for taking their biking skills to the next level; increase their appreciation and awareness of the natural environment; and, of course, nurture mind and body through fresh air and exercise.

Lake Accotink Park is located in central Springfield, just off Highland Street. The address is 7500 Accotink Park Road, Springfield, Virginia 22150.

To register for the class or the workshop, or for more information, call 703-569-0285.

ment, and can swim both forwards and backwards. The otter's tail works like a rudder and they have webbed feet for paddling. They can remain submerged for several minutes, travel up to a quarter of a mile underwater, and dive up to 55 feet. Their eyes are close together and high set on their head so they can observe their surroundings while treading water.



Historically, many fishermen have had ill feelings towards river otters because of the belief that otters deplete the local fishing and trout base. However, otters do exactly the opposite for the fish population. They feed mostly on slow moving fish such as suckers and chubs. Additionally they remove some of the more competitive fish from the water like bluegill and catfish, leaving the trout more readily available for the anglers.

Otters communicate with each other by whistling and shrill chatter calls during mating season. Mating season begins in February as soon as the previous group of young has left the nest. The male generally mates with many females in whose ranges overlap with his territory. Males leave the nest when the young are first born and return after three or four months to help raise the young.

The river otter usually has dark brown fur, with a paler whitish underbelly, and grayish or silver throat. The white facial whiskers and its acute sense of smell allow it to sense prey movements. In groups, or alone, the river otter appears to be a very playful animal. They can often be spotted sliding down mud banks or ice slides into lakes and ponds. These slides are one of the most common pieces of evidence of otter activity.



However, other signs exist such as:

- ◆ Rolling places- flattened vegetation littered with their droppings
- ◆ Haul-outs- trails leading out of the water with droppings and shellfish
- ◆ Scat- otter excrement, often containing bones from their diet
- ◆ Trails - about 8 inches wide with heel pad and claw marks

River otters can be active during the day if they are unmolested by human activity.

Although our conservation efforts are working, there is still much that can be done. Everyone can do their part to help the river otters and the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Remember, the Bay starts in your backyard! Your actions make a difference in the water quality and health of the region. Here are a few tips to start with:

Use Water Wisely

You can conserve water by only running the dishwasher when it is full and installing a water-saving showerhead. Taking showers instead of baths also conserves water and will save money on your water bill.

Use Household Products Properly

There are many products available that are biodegradable and don't harm the environment because they are less toxic. Never pour paints and solvents down the drain. Dispose of all cleaning products carefully.

Care for Your Lawn Properly

Use plants, trees, and grass, to help prevent soil erosion. Plants also use up harmful nutrients that would otherwise enter streams and pollute the water. More fertilizer is not always the answer to a healthy lawn. Water lawns and gardens during the morning and evening hours.

Practice Sensible Pest Management

Not all bugs are bad, and some help get rid unwanted rodents. Be careful when applying pesticides near water and animals. Do not apply pesticides if rain is forecasted.

Help Control Runoff and Soil Erosion

Divert drain spouts onto grassed areas and use wood, bricks, or interlocking stones for patios and walkways. Concrete does not absorb rainfall and creates harmful runoff of oil, fertilizers, and soil, into storm drains, which eventually run into streams and lakes.

Use Car Products Wisely

Whenever possible recycle harmful car products at a local automotive center. Wash your car on the grass so detergents are absorbed. Never pour used motor oil down a storm drain.

Reduce Emissions and Save Energy

Large amounts of nitrogen are coming from the air into the water. Car pooling and using public transportation will help lower these emissions. Turn off lights and lower the thermostat. Properly insulate your home and its heating and hot water pipes. This will also save you money on your energy bill.

Don't litter

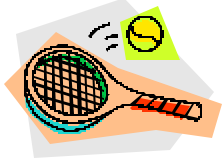
All trash thrown onto the ground washes into Lake Accotink when it rains and eventually into the Chesapeake Bay.

For more information on river otters visit the following websites:

www.pacd.org/resources/otter.htm
www.chesapeakebay.net/info/otter.cfm
www.enature.com

Help Wanted

Lake Accotink Park is looking for Instructors for
Spring and Summer classes of all types



Spring Classes

Looking for some part time work? Want to stay active in the community? Love to teach?

All reasons to apply at Lake Accotink Park for instructor positions. Classes begin in March and camps are in April. Pay is commensurate with experience. Call Lake Accotink Park at (703)569-0285, TTY (703)569-5200, for more information or to apply.

Sports Classes

Boot Camp
Biking for Fitness
Walking for Fitness
Soccer
Basketball
Tennis

Art Classes

Water Color Works
Oil Painting
Studio Art Class
Discover Drawing
One Stroke Painting
Discover Nature Art Class

For Dogs

Dog Care Camp
Puppy Kindergarten
Dog Obedience II
Dog Obedience Combo Class



Spring Camps

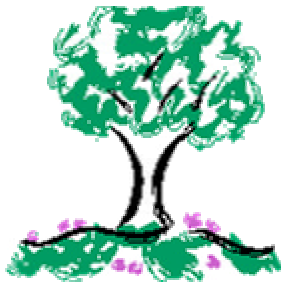
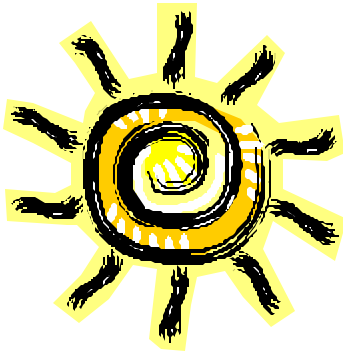
Watershed Exploration
Tennis Camp

Summer Camps

Summer is too short...
Don't spend it inside!
Work Outdoors...

Camp Counselor Positions Available!!

- Outdoor Fun Camp
- Tennis Camp
- Dog Care Day Camp
- History Camp



Must be able to work May 30th through August 20th

Accepting applications now. For more information, please call Lake Accotink Park at (703)569-0285, TTY (703)569-5200, or e-mail us at tawny.hammond@fairfaxcounty.gov

**FAIRFAX COUNTY
PARK AUTHORITY**

Lake Accotink Park
7500 Accotink Park Road
Springfield VA 22150

Phone: 703-569-0285

TTY number: 703-569-5200

<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/accotink>

If you have comments or questions regarding the **FLAP**, or if you are interested in contributing an article, please contact:

Tawny Hammond, Park Manager

tawny.hammond@fairfaxcounty.gov

703-569-0285

Spe-

cial Events & Programs

ADA Accommodations: Fairfax County is committed to giving all citizens equal access to recreation and leisure opportunities. In keeping with that policy and the Americans with Disabilities Act, reasonable accommodations are provided to individuals with disabilities in all Park Authority programs, services, and facilities. ADA accommodations include sign interpreters, alternative information formats, program modifications and inclusion support. Contact the ADA Specialist at 703-324-8563 or (TTY) (703)803-3354 for additional information.



Catch the Big News



More Trout Fishing for Less Money!

Don't miss the Action at Lake Accotink Park and Lake Fairfax Park

Spring Season Passes only \$20 (or \$18 for seniors or children ages 11 – 16)

Daily pass: \$10 (\$9 for seniors or children ages 11-16)

Passes can be purchased and used at either park.

Season runs February 27 through April 25, 2004

Don't Miss Out!

Virginia State Fishing License Required



Pet Corner

Pet First Aid and CPR Courses

When disaster strikes your four legged family member you can't call an ambulance! This class will teach you how to manage a pet-related emergency until you can get your pet to the veterinarian.

Classes are from 6:30pm to 9:30pm.

Class fee is \$25, just \$10 more to keep the book!



Call 703-569-0285 to find out more class times and dates!

Advanced registration is required, so be sure to call!

Dog Day Afternoon

Treat your canine companion to a special cruise aboard Lake Accotink Park's pontoon boat. The cruise will enchant your dog with glimpses of winter geese and other lake dwellers. Tour-boats cancelled in case of rain. Reservations required.

Coat is \$5 for adults, \$3 per child (ages 8-15)

Sunday January 18th, 2004

Tour runs from 2-3pm



Be sure to register at Lake Accotink Park (703)569-0285



Valentine's Day Cruise

Treat yourself and that special someone to a romantic cruise aboard Lake Accotink Park's enchanting tourboat. Together, experience the splendor of the surrounding lake as a winter's day quietly comes to a close. An interpretive history of Lake Accotink and the area is included in the tour. Reservations required.

Cost is \$5 per person

Tour runs from 4pm to 5pm

Saturday February 14th, 2004

Call (703)569-0285, TTY (703)569-5200 to make reservations



Dog Birthday Party Packages

You are barking up the right tree if you're looking for some canine birthday fun for you and your four-legged family member. Celebrate your pooch's birthday in style! Parties held in the picnic areas at scenic Lake Accotink Park, with



- a gift basket for the birthday dog
- goody bags for canine guests
- party favors

Call Lake Accotink Park at (703)569-0285, TTY (703)569-5200, to plan your furry family members birthday today!